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Attorney Docket No. NVIDP013

First Named Inventor:

DONOVAN, Walter E.

UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL (37 CFR § 1.53(b))

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Box Patent Application
Washington, DC 20231

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Sir: This is a request for filing a patent application under 37 CFR § 1.53(b) in the name of inventors:
Walter E. Donovan

For: SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE FOR CALCULATING A LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING COMPUTER GRAPHICS PROCESSING

Application Elements:

- 25 Pages of Specification, Claims and Abstract
- 06 Sheets of Drawings
- 02 Pages Combined Declaration and Power of Attorney

Accompanying Application Parts:

- Assignment and Assignment Recordation Cover Sheet (recording fee of \$40.00 enclosed)
- 37 CFR 3.73(b) Statement by Assignee
- Information Disclosure Statement with Form PTO-1449
 - Copies of IDS Citations
- Preliminary Amendment
- Return Receipt Postcard
- Small Entity Statement(s)
- Other:

Fee Calculation (37 CFR § 1.16)

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[] Multiple Dependent Claim Presented			\$130 = \$	OR	\$260 = \$	
* If the difference in Col. 1 is less than zero, enter "0" in Col. 2.			Total \$507	OR	Total \$	

Check No. in the amount of \$ 547.00 is enclosed.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees beyond the amount enclosed which may be required, or to credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 50-0384 (Order No. NVIDP013).

General Authorization for Petition for Extension of Time (37 CFR §1.136)

Applicants hereby make and generally authorize any Petitions for Extensions of Time as may be needed for any subsequent filings. The Commissioner is also authorized to charge any extension fees under 37 CFR §1.17 as may be needed to Deposit Account No. 50-0384 (Order No. NVIDP013).

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DRAFT - STOKESS600

Applicant/Patentee: Walter E. Donovan and John Montrym
Application or Patent No. Unassigned Atty Docket # NVIDP013/P000176
Filed or Issued: Herewith

**VERIFIED STATEMENT (DECLARATION) CLAIMING SMALL ENTITY STATUS
37 CFR 1.9(f) and 1.27(c)—SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN**

I hereby declare that I am

- The owner of the small business concern identified below:
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NAME OF CONCERN: nVIDIA
ADDRESS: 3535 Monroe Street, Santa Clara, California 95051

I hereby declare that the above identified small business concern qualifies as a small business concern as defined in 13 CFR 121.3-18, and reproduced in 37 CFR 1.9(d), for purposes of paying reduced fees under 41(a) and (b) of Title 35, U.S. Code, in that the number of employees of the concern, including those of its affiliates, does not exceed 500 persons. For purposes of this statement, (1) the number of employees of the business concern is the average over the previous fiscal year of the concern of the persons employed on a full-time, part-time or temporary basis during each of the pay periods of the fiscal year, and (2) concerns are affiliates of each other when either, directly or indirectly, one concern controls or has the power to control the other, or a third party or parties controls or has the power to control both.

I hereby declare that rights under contract or law have been conveyed to and remain with the small business concern identified above with regard to the invention entitled: SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE FOR CALCULATING A LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING COMPUTER GRAPHICS PROCESSING, by inventor(s) Walter E. Donovan and John Montrym, described in

- The specification filed herewith.
 Application Serial No. _____ Filed _____
 Patent # _____ issued _____

If the rights held by the above-identified small business concern are not exclusive, each individual, concern or organization having rights to the invention is listed below* and no rights to the invention are held by any person, other than the inventor, who could not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or by any concern which would not qualify as a small business concern under 37 CFR 1.9(d) or a nonprofit organization under 37 CFR 1.9(e). *Note: separate verified statements are required from each named person, concern or organization having rights to the invention averting to their status as small entities. (37 CFR 1.27)

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I acknowledge the duty to file, in this application or patent, notification of any change in status resulting in loss of entitlement to small entity status prior to paying, or at the time of paying, the earliest of the issue fee or any maintenance fee due after the date on which status as a small entity is no longer appropriate. (37 CFR 1.28(b)).

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U.S. PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

5 SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF
MANUFACTURE FOR CALCULATING A
LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING
COMPUTER GRAPHICS PROCESSING

10

INVENTORS: Walt Donovan
John Montrym

15

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SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE FOR
CALCULATING A LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING COMPUTER
5 GRAPHICS PROCESSING

by Inventors

10 Walt Donovan

John Montrym

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention relates to computer graphics, and more particularly to determining the level of detail (LOD) for texture mapping during computer graphics processing.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

20 Recent advances in computer performance have enabled graphic systems to provide more realistic graphical images using personal computers and home video game computers. In such graphic systems, some procedure must be implemented to "render" or draw graphic primitives to the screen of the system. A "graphic primitive" is a basic component of a graphic picture, such as a polygon, e.g., a triangle, or a vector. All graphic pictures are formed with combinations of these graphic primitives. Many procedures may be utilized to perform graphic primitive rendering.

Early graphic systems displayed images representing objects having extremely smooth surfaces. That is, textures, bumps, scratches, or other surface features were not modeled. In order to improve the quality of the image, texture mapping was developed to model the complexity of real world surface images. In general, texture mapping is the mapping of an image or a function onto a surface in three dimensions. Texture mapping is a relatively efficient technique for creating the appearance of a complex image without the tedium and the high computational cost of rendering the actual three dimensional detail that might be found on a surface of an object.

10

Many parameters have been texture mapped in conventional systems. Some of these parameters include surface color, specular reflection, normal vector perturbation, specularity, transparency, diffuse reflections, and shadows. In texture mapping, a source image known as the "texture" is mapped onto a surface in three dimensional space. The three dimensional surface is then mapped to the destination image. The destination image is then displayed on a graphic display screen. Examples of the texture of an object include the gravel on a highway or scuff marks on a wooden surface.

20

One tool used during texture mapping is an environment map. An environment map is an image or collection of images which characterize the appearance of a scene when viewed from a particular position. Each type of environment map has an associated projection which is used to compute the appearance along a ray traveling in a particular direction towards the camera. Not all types of environment maps capture the scene in every direction.

25

A variety of different forms of environment maps have been used in the past. An orthographic projection of a reflecting sphere to characterize the illumination of a scene is described by Williams in "Pyramidal Parametrics", Computer Graphics, Vol. 17, No. 3, pgs. 1-11, July, 1983. The intention was to use the environment map

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as an aid to the rapid computation of specular reflections. In an article by Greene entitled "Environment Mapping and Order Applications of Worlds Projections", IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications, Vol. 6, No. 11, pgs. 21-49, November, 1986, six images on the faces of a cube are used for a "cubic environment map".

5

Due to some limitations, spherical environment mapping is challenging to do in real time, and produces artifacts. If the reflection vector is used as an index into a cubic environment map, one can avoid these artifacts since sphere map approximations can also be generated from a six-sided (or cube) environment map

10 by using texture mapping to project the six cube faces onto a sphere. The six cube faces capture the environment color for all 3-D reflection directions without singularities.

During use of a cubic environment map, software renderers calculate a

15 reflection vector for each pixel, and use this to index into an axis-aligned cube map, a latitude/longitude map, or a $\sin(\text{latitude})/\text{longitude}$ map. The cubic environment map is a general table controlling what is reflected by the surface. Because the map is indexed by the reflection vector, specular spread functions can be incorporated into the maps themselves if they are based solely on the relative reflection angle, thus allowing highlighting, i.e. Phong highlighting.

Cubic environment mapping has proved effective because the eye gets a clear impression of surface curvature from the reflection's distortion of the environment image. Cubic environment maps express source illumination by direction alone. It is
25 built upon texture mapping, which is becoming more common and comparable in performance to linear shading. For more information on the basics of environment mapping, reference may be made to Blinn, Jim and Newell, Martin. "Texture and Reflection in Computer Generated Images". Communications of the ACM, Vol. 19, No. 10 (1976), pp. 542-547.

30

Occasionally, when rendering an object using a cubic environment map, one texel, or texture element, will correspond directly to a single pixel that is displayed on a monitor. In this situation the level of detail (LOD) is defined to be equal to zero (0) and the texel is neither magnified nor minified. However, the displayed image

- 5 can be a magnified or minified representation of the object. If the object is magnified, multiple pixels will represent a single texel. A magnified object corresponds to a negative LOD value. If the object is minified, a single pixel represents multiple texels. A minified object corresponds to a positive LOD value.

In general, the LOD value roughly corresponds to the amount of the cubic

- 10 environment map “covered” by a single pixel. The common convention is that each LOD is exactly half the size of the next higher-detail LOD, but LODs do not need to be restricted that way. Given that common convention, we then define the LOD number as the \log_2 of the texel to pixel scale ratio. Thus, LOD 0 means the pixel to texel scale is 1 to 1.

15

The amount of detail stored in different LOD representations may be appreciated by drawing an analogy to the detail perceived by an observer while observing an object. For example, very little detail may be perceived by an observer while watching an automobile from a distance. On the other hand, several details such as doors, windows, mirrors will be perceived if the observer is sufficiently close to the automobile. A finer level LOD may include such additional details also. For example, in Prior Art Figure 1, the top ball 100 is shown with a LOD that is 2 levels coarser than the bottom ball 102.

25

During texture mapping, conventional texture coordinates, i.e. s, t, r and q, are received and output coordinates, i.e. u, v, and p are outputted. From such outputted values, the LOD is calculated. One prior art method of calculating the LOD is set forth in Equation #1.

30

Equation #1

LOD = \log_2 LOD', where

$$\text{LOD}' = \max(u_x^2 + v_x^2 + p_x^2)^{1/2}, (u_y^2 + v_y^2 + p_y^2)^{1/2}$$

5 $u_x = [\ddot{a}(u^*q)/\ddot{a}x - u^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}x]/q$
 $v_x = [\ddot{a}(v^*q)/\ddot{a}x - v^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}x]/q$
 $p_x = [\ddot{a}(p^*q)/\ddot{a}x - p^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}x]/q$

10 $u_y = [\ddot{a}(u^*q)/\ddot{a}y - u^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}y]/q$
 $v_y = [\ddot{a}(v^*q)/\ddot{a}y - v^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}y]/q$
 $p_y = [\ddot{a}(p^*q)/\ddot{a}y - p^*\ddot{a}(q)/\ddot{a}y]/q$

As shown in Equation #1, differentiation is required to calculate the LOD. Such calculation is extremely time consuming, and may not be suitable for certain hardware. It is desirable to provide fast and simple circuits and methods for determining the LOD so that texture mapping can be performed fast in real time.

There is therefore a need for a system that allows for more efficient LOD calculation during the texture mapping process.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

A system, method and article of manufacture are provided for calculating a level of detail (LOD) value for use during computer graphics processing. First, a plurality of geometrically arranged coordinates is identified. A distance value is computed based on the geometrically arranged coordinates. A LOD value is then calculated using the distance value for use during computer graphics processing. In one embodiment, a derivative value is estimated based on the geometrically arranged coordinates, and the distance value is computed based on the derivative value. Such numerical solution provides a more efficient LOD calculation as opposed to alternative analytical methods.

In one embodiment of the present invention, the geometrically arranged coordinates include (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) which may take the form of texture coordinates (u_0, u_1, u_2, u_3) , texture coordinates (v_0, v_1, v_2, v_3) , or texture coordinates (p_0, p_1, p_2, p_3) . The geometrically arranged coordinates (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) may also be representative of a quadrilateral with z_0 being an upper left corner of the quadrilateral, z_1 being an upper right corner of the quadrilateral, z_2 being a lower left corner of the quadrilateral, and z_3 being a lower right corner of the quadrilateral. As an option, the quadrilateral may be a 2x2 pixel quadrilateral.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the derivative value is a derivative with respect to an x-axis. In such embodiment, the derivative value is calculated using the expression $((z_1 \cdot z_0) + (z_3 \cdot z_2))/2$. In an alternative embodiment, the derivative value is a derivative with respect to an y-axis. In such embodiment, the derivative value is calculated using the expression $((z_2 \cdot z_0) + (z_3 \cdot z_1))/2$.

In yet another embodiment of the present invention, the geometrically arranged coordinates are transformed into a different coordinate system (l, m, n) . The distance value is then estimated using an expression selected from the group of $(l_i -$

$l_0^2 + (m_1 - m_0)^2 + (n_1 - n_0)^2$, $(l_2 - l_0)^2 + (m_2 - m_0)^2 + (n_2 - n_0)^2$, $(l_3 - l_1)^2 + (m_3 - m_1)^2 + (n_3 - n_1)^2$, and $(l_3 - l_2)^2 + (m_3 - m_2)^2 + (n_3 - n_2)^2$.

In one aspect of the present invention, the LOD value is calculated during
5 general texture mapping, programmable pixel shading, or during the use of
dependent textures. In an alternative aspect, the LOD value may be calculated for
cube environment mapping, or for any other purpose.

In the case where the geometrically arranged coordinates (z_0 , z_1 , z_2 , z_3) reside
10 on separate sides of a cube map during cube environment mapping, measures may be
carried out to prevent erroneous results. In particular, a coordinate space transform
may be performed.

In yet another aspect of the present invention, it may be determined if the
15 signs of the q-values of the pixels in the 2x2 quadrilateral are the same. If it is
determined that the signs of the q-values of these pixels are not the same, the
coordinate values are based in different half spaces and thus cannot be used to
compute a correct LOD. As such, the LOD value may be set to infinity.

20 These and other advantages of the present invention will become apparent
upon reading the following detailed description and studying the various figures of
the drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and other aspects and advantages are better understood from
5 the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment of the invention with
reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates a pair of graphical images having different level of detail
(LOD) values;

10 Figure 2 illustrates a flowchart delineating the steps of calculating a level of detail
(LOD) during the cube environment mapping process in accordance with one
embodiment of the present invention;

15 Figure 2A is a diagram illustrating the geometrically arrangement of texture
coordinates which in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

20 Figure 3 is a flow diagram illustrating the detailed steps associated with
calculating the LOD using planar computations in operation 216 of Figure 2 in
accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

25 Figure 4 is a flow diagram illustrating the detailed steps associated with
calculating the LOD using cubic computations in operation 212 of Figure 2 in
accordance with one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4A illustrates a cube map where the geometrically arranged texture
coordinates reside on separate sides of the cube map; and

30 Figure 5 illustrates a flowchart delineating the steps of calculating a level of
detail (LOD) in association with dependent texture and any other type of computer
graphics processing.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

A cubic environment map is a texture map or general table indexed by a
5 three-dimensional vector. If the indexing vector is a reflection vector, for example,
specular spread functions can be incorporated into the maps themselves if they are
based solely on the relative reflection angle, thus allowing highlighting, i.e. Phong
highlighting. Since such highlights are pre-computed, there is no rendering-time
penalty for a high number of light sources. Indeed, maps can contain area lights or
10 photographic environments, or any combination of these. In general, though, the
indexing vector can be anything the application requires.

Figure 2 illustrates a flowchart delineating the steps of calculating a level of
detail (LOD) during the cube environment mapping process. As is commonly
15 known to those of ordinary skill in the art, such LOD is critical for determining the
amount of a texture covered by a single pixel. As shown in Figure 2, parameter
coordinates (s,t,r,q) are first identified in operation 200. It should be noted that
parameter coordinates (s,t,r,q) are received for four pixels which are situated in a
2x2 quadrilateral. In other words, there are four (s,t,r,q) quadruplets, or sixteen total
20 values, identified in operation 200.

Such parameter coordinates (s,t,r,q) represent coordinates in the parametric
coordinate space, which is widely known to those of ordinary skill in the art. In
particular, parameter coordinates (s,t,r,q) are used to represent texture-size-
25 independent homogeneous three dimensional texture coordinates.

It should be noted that the LOD computation of the present invention
involves distances in pixels and thus requires working with texture coordinates (u, v,
p). Texture coordinates (u, v, p) represent texture coordinates after scaling by the
30 texture size and the homogeneous coordinate q. Specifically, $u = (s / q) * \text{width}$, etc.

Figure 2A is a diagram illustrating the geometrically arrangement of texture coordinates which, in the present description, may each be represented generally by the variable z. As shown, the coordinates may be representative of a quadrilateral, i.e. square, with z_0 being an upper left corner of the square, z_1 being an upper right corner of the square, z_2 being a lower left corner of the square, and z_3 being a lower right corner of the square.

The process continues by determining in decision 202 whether the q-values of the parameter coordinates each have the same sign. If it is determined that the pixels of the 2x2 pixel quad have the same q sign in decision 202, the parameter coordinate values represent points that come from the same half space (i.e., either in front of the eye or in back of the eye), and the process may continue. If the signs differ, however, then the parameter coordinate values are based in different half spaces and thus cannot be used to compute a correct LOD. In such case, it is observed that the parameter coordinate values are "infinitely far apart" and thus the LOD value is marked to be set to "infinity." Note operation 203. It should be noted that the LOD hardware checks for this case and executes accordingly.

Thereafter, in operation 206, a side of a cube map is selected. The selected side of the cube map is that which corresponds to the parameter coordinate with the highest absolute value. For example, if s were largest, and $s > 0$, then the positive x side of the cube map would be selected. If two or more parameter coordinates have the same absolute value, a convention may be established to pick one or the other.

With continuing reference to Figure 2, the two smaller parameter coordinates are then divided by the parameter coordinate having the largest absolute value. See operation 208. As a result, four triplets (s' , t' , side) are generated. By definition, s' and t' are in the range [-1.0, 1.0].

It is then determined in decision 209 whether the LOD value is marked to be set to infinity. If so, the LOD value is set to infinity in operation 213. If not, it is

determined in decision 210 whether all four “side” values of the triplets are the same. If not, the LOD is calculated using a cubical LOD computation in operation 212. More information on such computation will be set forth in greater detail during reference to Figure 4.

5

If, however, it is determined in decision 210 that all four side values of the triplets are the same, texture coordinates (u' , v') are calculated using Equations #2 in operation 214. Since the range of s' and t' are in [-1.0, 1.0], and it is desired that u' and v' span the cube map side, then size is set equal to half the width or height of the largest LOD of the texture map comprising the selected cube map side. Thereafter, the LOD is calculated using a planar LOD computation, as indicated in operation 216. More information on such computation will be set forth in greater detail during reference to Figure 3.

10
15

Equations #2

$$u' = s' * \text{size}$$
$$v' = t' * \text{size}.$$

20

Figure 3 is a flow diagram illustrating the detailed steps associated with calculating the LOD using planar computations in operation 216 of Figure 2. As shown, in operation 300, an x derivative is calculated for each coordinate, i.e. u_x , v_x , p_x , etc. by differentiating the bilinear function which is shown in Equations #3.

25

Equations #3

$$z(x,y) = z_0 * (1-x) * (1-y) + z_1 * x * (1-y) + z_2 * (1-x) * y + z_3 * x * y, \text{ where}$$

30

$$x=0, y=0 \text{ at pixel 0}$$

$$x=1, y=0 \text{ at pixel 1}$$

x=0, y=1 at pixel 2

x=1, y=1 at pixel 3.

5 The x derivative is calculated for each coordinate, i.e. u_x , v_x , p_x , etc using Equations #4.

Equations #4

10 $u'_x = ((u_1, u_0) + (u_3, u_2))/2$

$v'_x = ((v_1, v_0) + (v_3, v_2))/2$

$p'_x = ((p_1, p_0) + (p_3, p_2))/2$

15

In operation 302, a y derivative is calculated for each coordinate, i.e. u_y , v_y , p_y , etc. by differentiating the bilinear function described above. See Equations #5.

Equations #5

20

$u'_y = ((u_2, u_0) + (u_3, u_1))/2$

$v'_y = ((v_2, v_0) + (v_3, v_1))/2$

$p'_y = ((p_2, p_0) + (p_3, p_1))/2$

25 Next, in operation 304, two distance values, d_x and d_y , are computed, as set forth in Equations #6.

Equations #6

30 $d_x = u_x^2 + v_x^2 + p_x^2$

$d_y = u_y^2 + v_y^2 + p_y^2$

Finally, in operation 306, the two distance values, d_x and d_y , are used to compute the LOD. This is accomplished using Equation #7. Such numerical solution provides a more efficient LOD calculation as opposed to alternative
5 analytical methods.

Equation #7

$$\text{LOD} = \frac{1}{2} \log_2 (\max (d_x, d_y))$$

004200 = ST00000000

- 10 Figure 4 is a flow diagram illustrating the detailed steps associated with calculating the LOD value using cubic computations in operation 212 of Figure 2. First, in operation 400, the values (s' , t' , side) from operation 208 of Figure 2 are converted to a different coordinate system (l, m, n) using a coordinate transform.
15 An exemplary coordinate transform is shown in Table 1.

Figure 4A illustrates the criticality of performing the transform of operation 400. As shown, a cube map has geometrically arranged texture coordinates that reside on separate sides of the cube map. Due to the negative texture coordinate values of one side of the cube map with respect to the other, erroneous results would occur from their use during the LOD calculation.
20

Table 1

25 void coord_transform(float s, float t, int side, float *l,
 float *m, float *n)
 {
 assert(width==height);

30 float size = width/2.0;
 float u = s * size;
 float v = t * size;

```
switch(side)
{
    case CUBE_NEGX:
        *l=-size;  *m= v;   *n= u;
        break;
    case CUBE_POSX:
        *l= size;   *m= v;   *n=-u;
        break;
    case CUBE_NEGY:
        *l= u;     *m=-size;  *n= v;
        break;
    case CUBE_POSY:
        *l= u;     *m= size;   *n=-v;
        break;
    case CUBE_NEGZ:
        *l=-u;    *m= v;   *n=-size;
        break;
    case CUBE_POSZ:
        *l= u;     *m= v;   *n= size;
        break;
}
}
```

Note that for this coordinate transformation to be successful, the two
dimensional texture maps representing each side of the cubic environment map are
restricted so that each side is square, and all maps are the same size. Thus a single
“side” value can be used to represent all six texture maps.

Next, in operation **402**, four distance measures, d_{01} , d_{02} , d_{13} , d_{23} , are each
calculated. Such is accomplished using Equations #8.

Equations #8

$$d_{01} = (l_1 - l_0)^2 + (m_1 - m_0)^2 + (n_1 - n_0)^2$$
$$d_{02} = (l_2 - l_0)^2 + (m_2 - m_0)^2 + (n_2 - n_0)^2$$
$$d_{13} = (l_3 - l_1)^2 + (m_3 - m_1)^2 + (n_3 - n_1)^2$$

$$d_{23} = (l_3 - l_2)^2 + (m_3 - m_2)^2 + (n_3 - n_2)^2$$

Finally, the four distance measures, d_{01} , d_{02} , d_{13} , d_{23} , are used to compute the LOD. This is done using Equations #9. It should be noted that such numerical
5 solution provides a more efficient LOD calculation as opposed to alternative analytical methods.

Equations #9

10 $LOD = \frac{1}{2} \log_2 (\max (d_{01}, d_{02}, d_{13}, d_{23}))$

In the present description, the LOD value is calculated in the context of cube environment mapping. It should be noted, however, that the LOD value may also be calculated in the foregoing manner during general texture mapping, during the use of
15 dependent textures, programmable pixel shaders where texture coordinates are generated, or for any other purpose.

A dependent texture is a texture map or general table indexed, at least once, by a function of a value looked up on a texture map or general table. Specifically,
20 where a non-dependent texture look-up can be represented by Equation #10,

Equation #10

Pixel_value = texture_map(u, v, p)

25 a dependent texture look-up can be represented by Equation #11.

Equation #11

30 Pixel_value = texture_map(function(texture_map(u, v, p)))

It should be noted that the number of texture map look-ups inclusive in a dependent texture is not limited to the two above, but can be iterated to as many stages as needed.

5 Figure 5 illustrates a flowchart delineating the steps of calculating a level of detail (LOD) in association with dependent textures and any other type of computer graphics processing. As shown in Figure 5, parameter coordinates (s,t,r,q) of a 2x2 pixel quadrilateral are first received in operation 500. Such operation is similar to that of operation 200 of Figure 2.

10 In decision 502, it is determined whether the q-values of the parameter coordinates each have the same sign. If it is determined that the pixels of the 2x2 pixel quad have the same q sign in decision 502, it is observed that the parameter coordinate values are "infinitely far apart" and thus the LOD value is marked to be
15 set to "infinity." Note operation 504.

Thereafter, in operation 506, texture coordinates (u,v,p) are calculated by scaling the texture width, height and depth, respectively. It should be noted that these values are not limited to three dimensions. If associated hardware supports n
20 dimensional lookups, then there would be n texture coordinates used during the use of the present invention. In the present description, three dimensions are assumed to clarify the presentation.

25 It is then determined in decision 507 whether the LOD value is marked to be set to infinity. If so, the LOD value is set to infinity in operation 508. If not, the LOD is calculated using a planar LOD computation, as indicated in operation 509. It should be noted that such computations are those previously set forth in Figure 3.

30 While various embodiments have been described above, it should be understood that they have been presented by way of example only, and not limitation. Thus, the breadth and scope of a preferred embodiment should not be

limited by any of the above-described exemplary embodiments, but should be defined only in accordance with the following claims and their equivalents.

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CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for calculating a level of detail (LOD) value for use during
2 computer graphics processing, comprising:
3 (a) identifying a plurality of geometrically arranged coordinates;
4 (b) computing a distance value based on the geometrically arranged coordinates;
5 and
6 (c) calculating a LOD value using the distance value for use during computer
7 graphics processing.
- 1 2. The method as recited in claim 1, and further comprising estimating a
2 derivative value based on the geometrically arranged coordinates, wherein
3 the distance value is computed based on the derivative value.
- 1 3. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the geometrically arranged
2 coordinates include (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) which are representative of a quadrilateral
3 with z_0 being an upper left corner of the quadrilateral, z_1 being an upper right
4 corner of the quadrilateral, z_2 being a lower left corner of the quadrilateral, z_3
5 being a lower right corner of the quadrilateral.
- 1 4. The method as recited in claim 3, wherein the quadrilateral is a 2x2 pixel
2 quadrilateral.
- 1 6. The method as recited in claim 3, wherein the derivative value is a derivative
2 with respect to an x-axis.
- 1 7. The method as recited in claim 6, wherein the derivative value is calculated
2 using the expression $((z_1, z_0) + (z_3, z_2))/2$.

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- 1 8. The method as recited in claim 3, wherein the derivative value is a derivative
2 with respect to an y-axis.
- 1 9. The method as recited in claim 8, wherein derivative value is calculated
2 using the expression $((z_2, z_0) + (z_3, z_1))/2$.
- 1 10. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the geometrically arranged
2 coordinates are texture coordinates (u_0, u_1, u_2, u_3) .
- 1 11. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the geometrically arranged
2 coordinates are texture coordinates (v_0, v_1, v_2, v_3) .
- 1 12. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the geometrically arranged
2 coordinates are texture coordinates (p_0, p_1, p_2, p_3) .
- 1 13. The method as recited in claim 2, wherein the LOD value is calculated for
2 dependent textures.
- 1 14. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the LOD value is calculated for
2 cube environment mapping.
- 1 15. The method as recited in claim 1, and further comprising determining if the
2 geometrically arranged coordinates reside on separate sides of a cube map,
3 and performing a coordinate space transform if the geometrically arranged
4 coordinates reside on separate sides of the cube map.
- 1 16. The method as recited in claim 1, and further comprising determining if a
2 sign of a q-value of a pixel associated with each coordinate is the same.

- 1 17. The method as recited in claim 16, and further comprising setting the LOD
2 value to infinity if it is determined that the sign of the q-value of each pixel is
3 not the same.
- 1 18. The method as recited in claim 1, wherein the geometrically arranged
2 coordinates include (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) which are representative of a quadrilateral
3 with z_0 being an upper left corner of the quadrilateral, z_1 being an upper right
4 corner of the quadrilateral, z_2 being a lower left corner of the quadrilateral, z_3
5 being a lower right corner of the quadrilateral.
- 1 19. The method as recited in claim 18, and further comprising transforming the
2 geometrically arranged coordinates to a different coordinate system (l,m,n) ,
3 wherein the distance value is estimated using an expression selected from the
4 group of $(l_1 - l_0)^2 + (m_1 - m_0)^2 + (n_1 - n_0)^2$, $(l_2 - l_0)^2 + (m_2 - m_0)^2 + (n_2 - n_0)^2$,
5 $(l_3 - l_1)^2 + (m_3 - m_1)^2 + (n_3 - n_1)^2$, and $(l_3 - l_2)^2 + (m_3 - m_2)^2 + (n_3 - n_2)^2$.
- 1 20. A computer program embodied on a computer readable medium for
2 calculating a level of detail (LOD) value for use during computer graphics
3 processing, comprising:
4 (a) a code segment for identifying a plurality of geometrically arranged
5 coordinates;
6 (b) a code segment for computing a distance value based on the geometrically
7 arranged coordinates; and
8 (c) a code segment for calculating a LOD value using the distance value for use
9 during computer graphics processing.
- 1 21. The computer program as recited in claim 20, and further comprising a code
2 segment for estimating a derivative value based on the geometrically
3 arranged coordinates, wherein the distance value is computed based on the
4 derivative value.

- 1 22. The computer program as recited in claim 21, wherein the geometrically
2 arranged coordinates include (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) which are representative of a
3 quadrilateral with z_0 being an upper left corner of the quadrilateral, z_1 being
4 an upper right corner of the quadrilateral, z_2 being a lower left corner of the
5 quadrilateral, z_3 being a lower right corner of the quadrilateral.
- 1 23. The computer program as recited in claim 22, wherein the quadrilateral is a
2 2x2 pixel quadrilateral.
- 1 24. The computer program as recited in claim 22, wherein the derivative value is
2 a derivative with respect to an x-axis.
- 1 25. The computer program as recited in claim 24, wherein the derivative value is
2 calculated using the expression $((z_1, z_0) + (z_3, z_2))/2$.
- 1 26. The computer program as recited in claim 22, wherein the derivative value is
2 a derivative with respect to an y-axis.
- 1 27. The computer program as recited in claim 26, wherein derivative value is
2 calculated using the expression $((z_2, z_0) + (z_3, z_1))/2$.
- 1 28. The computer program as recited in claim 20, wherein the geometrically
2 arranged coordinates are texture coordinates (u_0, u_1, u_2, u_3) .
- 1 29. The computer program as recited in claim 20, wherein the geometrically
2 arranged coordinates are texture coordinates (v_0, v_1, v_2, v_3) .
- 1 30. The computer program as recited in claim 20, wherein the geometrically
2 arranged coordinates are texture coordinates (p_0, p_1, p_2, p_3) .

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- 1 31. The computer program as recited in claim 21, wherein the LOD value is
2 calculated for dependent textures.
- 1 32. The computer program as recited in claim 20, wherein the LOD value is
2 calculated for cube environment mapping.
- 1 33. The computer program as recited in claim 20, and further comprising a code
2 segment for determining if the geometrically arranged coordinates reside on
3 separate sides of a cube map, and a code segment for performing a coordinate
4 space transform if the geometrically arranged coordinates reside on separate
5 sides of the cube map.
- 1 34. The computer program as recited in claim 20, and further comprising a code
2 segment for determining if a sign of a q-value of a pixel associated with each
3 coordinate is the same.
- 1 35. The computer program as recited in claim 34, and further comprising a code
2 segment for setting the LOD value to infinity if it is determined that the sign
3 of the q-value of each pixel is not the same.
- 1 36. The computer program as recited in claim 20, wherein the geometrically
2 arranged coordinates include (z_0, z_1, z_2, z_3) which are representative of a
3 quadrilateral with z_0 being an upper left corner of the quadrilateral, z_1 being
4 an upper right corner of the quadrilateral, z_2 being a lower left corner of the
5 quadrilateral, z_3 being a lower right corner of the quadrilateral.
- 1 37. The computer program as recited in claim 36, and further comprising a code
2 segment for transforming the geometrically arranged coordinates to a
3 different coordinate system (l, m, n) , wherein the distance value is estimated
4 using an expression selected from the group of $(l_1 - l_0)^2 + (m_1 - m_0)^2 + (n_1 -$

5 $n_0)^2, (l_2 - l_0)^2 + (m_2 - m_0)^2 + (n_2 - n_0)^2, (l_3 - l_1)^2 + (m_3 - m_1)^2 + (n_3 - n_1)^2$, and $(l_3 -$
6 $l_2)^2 + (m_3 - m_2)^2 + (n_3 - n_2)^2$:

- 1 38. A system for calculating a level of detail (LOD) value for use during
2 computer graphics processing, comprising:
3 (a) logic for identifying a plurality of geometrically arranged coordinates;
4 (b) logic for computing a distance value based on the geometrically arranged
5 coordinates; and
6 (c) logic for calculating a LOD value using the distance value for use during
7 computer graphics processing.

SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE FOR
CALCULATING A LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING COMPUTER
GRAPHICS PROCESSING

ABSTRACT

A system, method and article of manufacture are provided for calculating a level of detail (LOD) value for use during computer graphics processing. First, a plurality of geometrically arranged coordinates is identified. A distance value is computed based on the geometrically arranged coordinates. A LOD value is then calculated using the distance value for use during computer graphics processing. In one embodiment, a derivative value is estimated based on the geometrically arranged coordinates, and the distance value is computed based on the derivative value.

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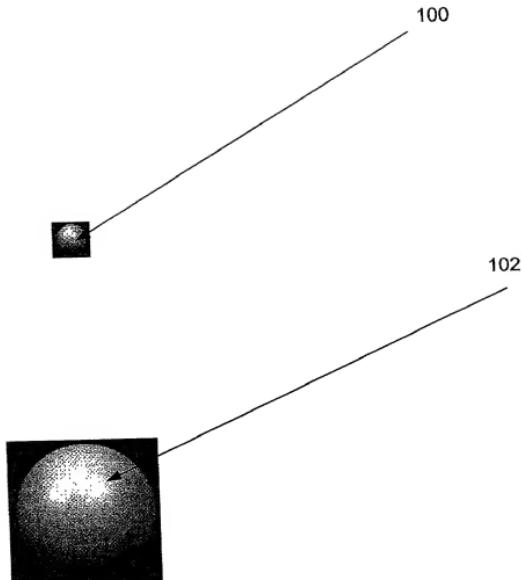


Figure 1
Prior Art

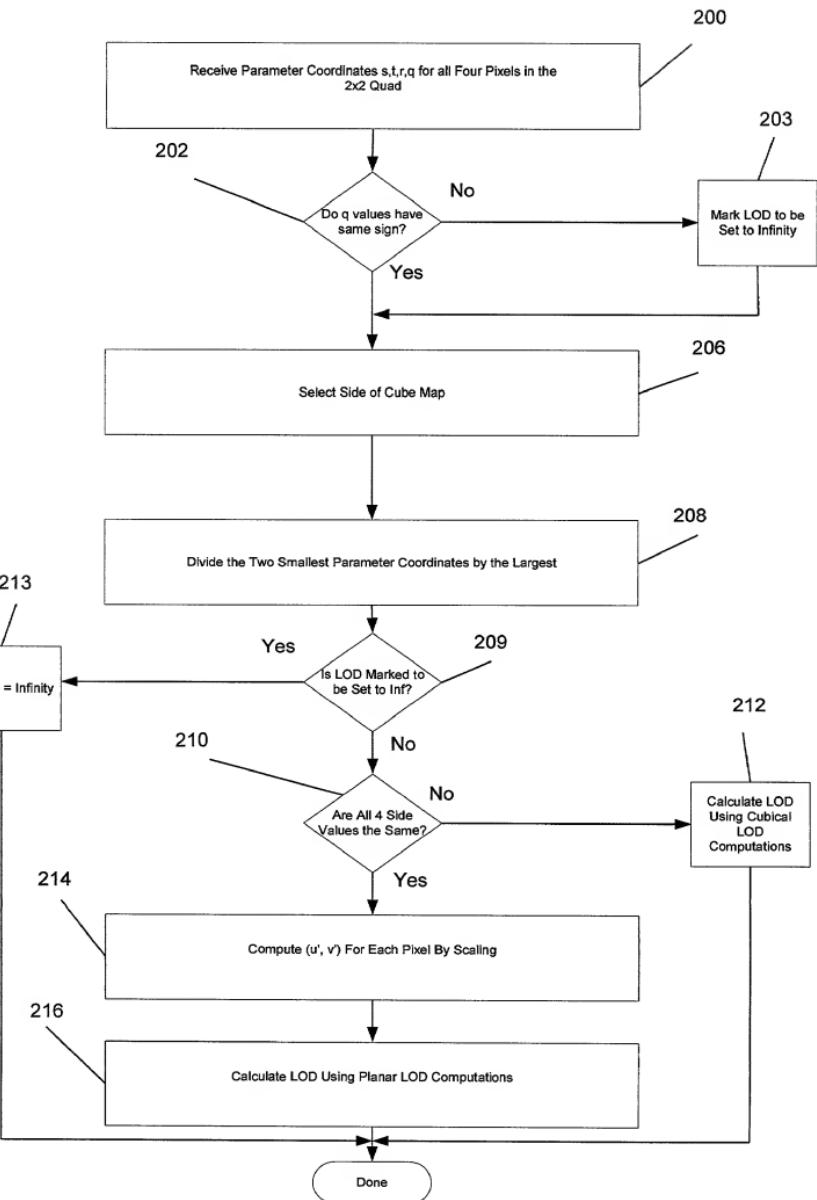


Figure 2

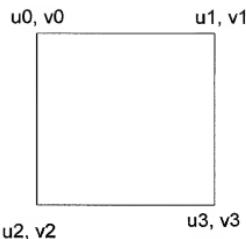


Figure 2A

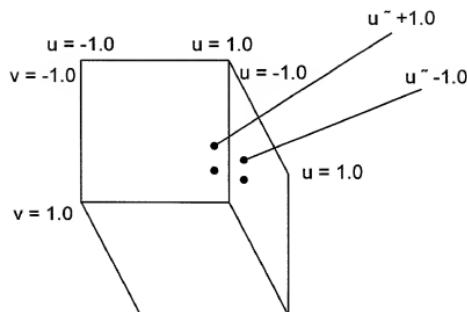


Figure 4A

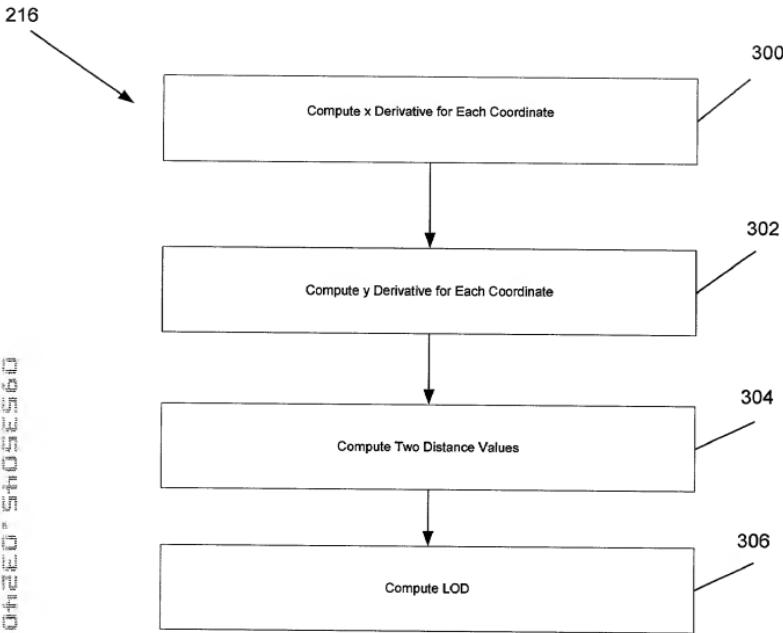
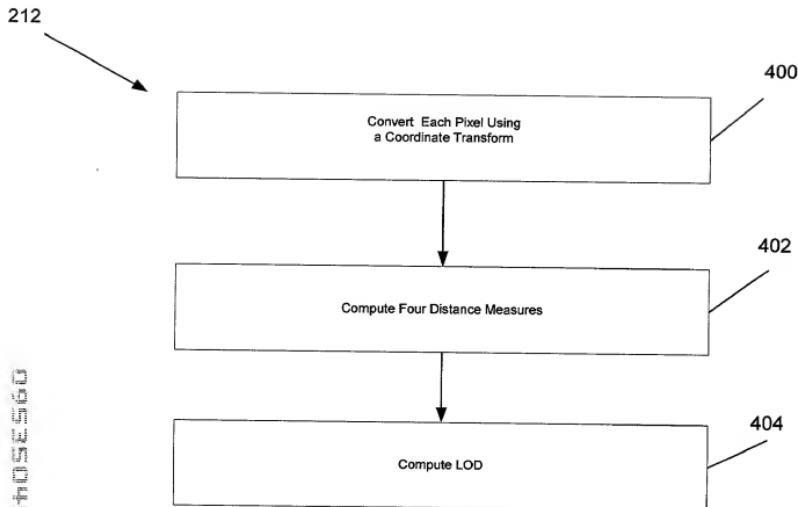


Figure 3



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Figure 4

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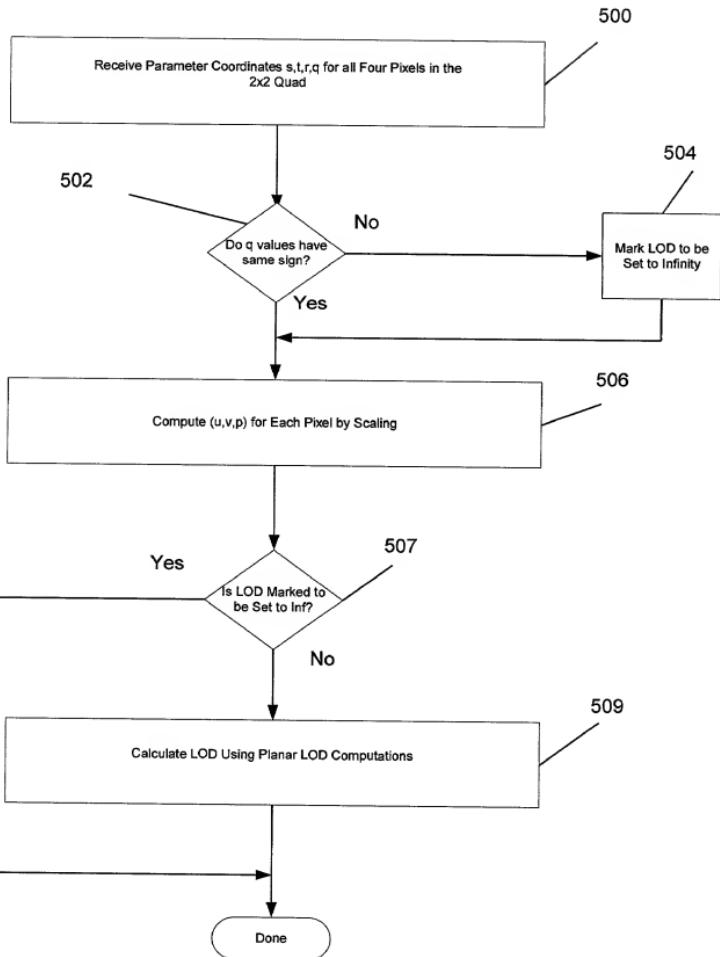


Figure 5

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR ORIGINAL U.S. PATENT APPLICATION

Attorney's Docket No. NVIDP013/P000176

As a below-named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe that I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter, which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:
SYSTEM, METHOD AND ARTICLE OF MANUFACTURE FOR CALCULATING A LEVEL OF DETAIL (LOD) DURING COMPUTER GRAPHICS PROCESSING, the specification of which,

(Check one)

1. is attached hereto.
2. Was filed on _____ as
U.S. Application Serial No. _____
and was amended on _____.
3. was filed on _____ as
International PCT Application Serial No. _____
and was amended on _____.

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information, which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, CFR § 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States code, § 119(a)-(d) or § 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or § 365(a) of any PCT International application which designated at least one country other than the United States, listed below and have identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or PCT International application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application(s)

Priority Benefits Claimed?

Yes No

(Appl. No.)	(Country)	(Filing Date)	
(Appl. No.)	(Country)	(Filing Date)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
(Appl. No.)	(Country)	(Filing Date)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below:

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120 of any United States application(s), or § 365(c) of any PCT International application designating the United States, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT International application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

Prior U.S. Application(s)

(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status - patented, pending, abandoned)
(Application Serial No.)	(Filing Date)	(Status - patented, pending, abandoned)

And I hereby appoint the law firm of Hickman Stephens Coleman & Hughes, including Paul L. Hickman (Reg. No. 28,516); L. Keith Stephens (Reg. No. 32,632); Brian R. Coleman (Reg. No. 39,145); Michael J. Hughes (Reg. No. 29,077); Michael E. Melton (Reg. No. 32,276); Kevin J. Zilka (Reg. No. 41,429); Dominic Kotab (Reg. No. 42,762); Raymond E. Roberts (Reg. No. 38,597); Vidya R. Bhakar (Reg. No. 42,323); Larry B. Guernsey (Reg. No. 40,008); Douglas E. Mackenzie (Reg. No. 38,955); Michael D. Plimier (Reg. No. 43,004); Ronald B. Feree (Reg. No. P46,327); George B. Leavell (Reg. No. P45,436); Stefanie M. Howell (Reg. No. P45,929); Robert D. Hayden (Reg. No. 42,645); Stephen H. Pettigrew (Reg. No. 35,978) and Paul D. Carmichael (Reg. No. 18,679) as my principal attorneys to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code, and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issuing thereon.

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Inventor's signature: Walter E. Donovan Date of Signature: 3/23/00

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